

splash!

quick facts on...

# Xeriscape: How to Save Water Through Water-smart Landscaping

MARCH 12, 2001

## The South Florida Water Management District

is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts.

Our Mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems, and water supply.



*Sea grape*

Did you know that half of residential water is used for outdoor irrigation? You can cut your outdoor water use substantially with water-conserving plants and use of Xeriscape principles.

Xeriscape is water conservation through creative landscaping. The term Xeriscaping means water-conserving, drought-tolerant landscaping, or simply the use of the right plant in the right place—with proper maintenance and water-wise watering.

Follow the seven fundamentals of Xeriscape systematically and you'll be well on your way to saving water!

**1. Design your landscape.** Careful planning is crucial to the long-term success of a Xeriscape landscape. You can minimize your initial investment by installing your Xeriscape in phases. First, make a simple site plan drawing of your property. Note slopes, drainage problems and existing plants and trees. Also note shaded and sunny areas. Determine the areas that will be irrigated when you select plants.

**2. Select the right plant for the right area.** Select and group plants according to their water needs to eliminate unnecessary watering. You should have three zones in your site plan:

*Natural zones:* Plants in this area can live on rainfall. They can be native plants or cultivated plants that have adapted to Florida.

*Low water or "drought-tolerant" zones:* Plants in these areas can survive mostly on rainfall.

*Moderate or "oasis" water zones:* These areas require regular watering and should be limited as accents in your Xeriscape. Keep these zones functional, such as entryways, turf areas and fruit or vegetable gardens.

**3. Analyze the soil.** Determine the acid and alkaline levels (pH) of your soil before

planting. You can mix organic matter such as compost, peat, manure or topsoil into sandy soils for enrichment and to retain moisture.

**4. Have limited turf areas.** Turf is the single largest consumer of water in a landscape. Always look for drought-tolerant turf varieties. Consider mulch as an alternative to turf. Avoid long, narrow turf areas because they are difficult to water efficiently.

**5. Water wisely.** Drought-tolerant plants can survive mostly on rainfall. If watering is necessary, do it only in the early morning, and in accordance with any water restrictions, to reduce evaporation. Remember, Florida Statutes require that all new automatic lawn sprinkler systems must have a rain sensor device or shut-off switch which overrides the system cycle following adequate rainfall. Water trees, shrubs, flowers and ground covers with low-volume drip or spray heads. These low-volume methods include "soaker hoses" in which water escapes through tiny holes in the hose. Apply the "soaker hose" to the root zone of the plant so that the water does not run off the root area.

**6. Use mulches.** Mulches limit weed growth and retain moisture. Two to three inches of mulch on garden beds and walkways also reduces weed growth and slows erosion. Avoid cypress mulch. Use other organic mulches such as recycled mulch, bark chips, wood shavings or pine straw/needles.

**7. Properly maintain your landscape.** Overwatering increases the risk of plant disease. To encourage deep rooting and more drought-resistance, water plants thoroughly without over-watering.

Fertilize properly: excessive fertilizer promotes fast, but weak growth and actually increases a plant's water needs, as does over-pruning.

## Plants for Your Xeriscape

Some people think of a desert scene when they hear "Xeriscape," but this is not the look of a typical Xeriscape. Some of the "Florida Favorites" you can use for your Xeriscape landscape are listed here. Several of them are lush and tropical-looking. They will add to the beauty of your landscape while conserving water.

Consult your nursery professional for information on which of these plants are appropriate for your region.

### Trees

Bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)  
 Dahoon holly (*Ilex cassine*)  
 Geiger tree (*Cordia sebestena*)  
 Gumbo Limbo (*Bursera simaruba*)  
 Ironwood (*Krugiodendron ferreum*)  
 Live oak (*Quercus virginiana*)  
 Magnolia, southern  
     (*Magnolia grandiflora*)  
 Magnolia, sweet bay  
     (*Magnolia virginiana*)  
 Myrsine (*Rapanea guianensis*)  
 Paradise tree (*Simarouba glauca*)  
 Pigeon plum (*Coccoloba diversifolia*)  
 Red bay (*Persea borbonia*)  
 Red maple (*Acer rubrum*)  
 Sea grape (*Coccoloba uvifera*)  
 Silver buttonwood (*Conocarpus erectus* var. *sericeus*)  
 Simpson's stopper (*Myricanthes fragrans*)  
 Slash pine (*Pinus elliotii*)  
 Southern red cedar (*Juniperus silicicola*)  
 Trumpet tree (*Tabebuia* spp.)



Sweet bay magnolia

### Shrubs

Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*)  
 Cocoplum (*Chrysobalanus icaco*)  
 Coral bean (*Erythrina herbacea*)  
 Crinum lily (*Crinum asiaticum*)  
 Firebush (*Hamelia patens*)  
 Florida privet (*Forestiera segregata*)  
 Holly, Stokes dwarf (*Ilex vomitoria*)  
 Jamaica caper (*Capparis cyanophallophora*)  
 Marlberr (*Ardisia escallonioides*)  
 Necklace pod (*Sophora tomentosa*)  
 Walter's viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum*)  
 Wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*)  
 White indigo berry (*Randia aculeata*)  
 White stopper (*Eugenia axillaris*)  
 Wild coffee (*Psychotria nervosa*)  
 Wild coffee, dwarf (*Psychotria ligustrifolia*)

## Palms and Cycads

Buccaneer or Sargent's palm  
     (*Pseudophoenix sargentii*)  
 Cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*)  
 Coontie (*Zamia pumila*)  
 Paurotis/Everglades palm  
     (*Acoelorrhapha wrightii*)  
 Queen sago (*Cycas circinalis*)  
 Royal palm (*Roystonea elata*)  
 Saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*)  
 Thatch palm (*Thrinax* spp.)



A successfully Xeriscaped yard

### Ferns

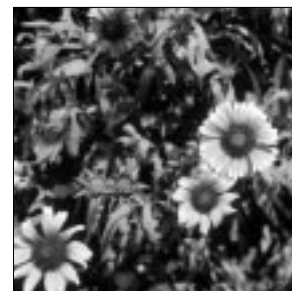
Boston fern (*Nephrolepis exaltata*)  
 Leather fern (*Acrostichum danaeifolium*)  
 Swamp fern (*Blechnum serrulatum*)

## Accent Grasses, Vines and Groundcovers

Bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea spectabilis*)  
 Coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)  
 Cordgrass (*Spartina bakeri*)  
 Corky-stemmed passion-flower (*Passiflora suberosa*)  
 Fakahatchee grass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*)  
 Florida gama grass (*Tripsacum floridanum*)  
 Lantana, trailing (*Lantana montevidensis*)  
 Liriope (*Liriope muscar*)  
 Mondo grass (*Ophiopogon japonicus*)  
 Purple love grass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*)  
 Railroad vine (*Ipomoea pes-caprae*)  
 Sea oats (*Uniola paniculata*)

## Annuals/Perennials/Wildflowers

Beach sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*)  
 Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)  
 Blanket flower (*Gaillardia pulchella*)  
 Lantana, pineland  
     (*Lantana depressa*)  
 Lantana, wild (*Lantana involucrata*)  
 Pentas (*Pentas lanceolata*)  
 Porter weed  
     (*Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*)  
 Sea oxeye daisy  
     (*Borrchia frutescens*)  
 Spider lily (*Hymenocallis latifolia*)  
 Tickseed (*Coreopsis leavenworthii*)



Blanket flower

**Xeriscape and save time, money and water! For more information, go to [sfwmd.gov](http://sfwmd.gov).**



KR 4/18/01

**[sfwmd.gov](http://sfwmd.gov)**

**South Florida Water Management District**  
**3301 Gun Club Road**  
**West Palm Beach, Florida 33406**  
**561-686-8800 • FL WATS 800-432-2045**  
**[www.sfwmd.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov)**

MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 24680  
 West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680

### SERVICE CENTERS

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 Palm Beach  
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